

EXHIBIT 31  
DATE 3/11/11  
HB 161

Dear Senator Balyeat,

I am a small business owner in Bozeman and one of your constituents in Senate District 34. Thank you for representing me and our neighbors. I am writing to you today about HB 161, to be heard by the Senate Judiciary Committee on March 11<sup>th</sup>. I urge you to vote no HB 161.

The current medical marijuana law is a voter initiative passed by the same citizens that you represent. While admittedly the current law has some flaws, it sets a dangerous precedent to override a voter initiative, especially one passed with such a majority. Indeed it would be the first time in Montana history that a voter initiative was repealed by legislators. The voters of Montana want and need legalized medical marijuana and it would be hubris on the part of our representatives to decide not to listen to their constituents.

Instead of amending the current medical marijuana law so that loopholes and undesirable consequences were eliminated, this bill would destroy the beneficial and necessary medical marijuana program in Montana. Clearly, this bill is not about public safety, but about increasing conviction rates for non-violent offenders (those who are now considered patients) and clogging our criminal justice system with frivolous arrests which will inevitably squander much needed resources for genuine threats to public safety. This bill will serve to destroy the patient's right to seek safe, effective treatment and the doctor's professional recommendation for a safe, effective alternative to dangerously ineffective and potentially fatal pharmaceuticals. HB 161 will also make it impossible for chronically sick and suffering patients and veterans to receive the treatment they depend on to live a life worth living and for doctors to administer the quality care their Hippocratic Oath requires of them.

As a conservative, I am appalled that the right to seek safe, effective and quality healthcare will be taken from the individual and their doctor in order to be legislated by the state. As a patient, I know firsthand how the quality of a patient's life can dramatically improve due to the ability to seek safe, effective treatment through medical cannabis. Before I was medical marijuana patient I had a difficult time working a full-time job due to my debilitating and chronic pain. During the previous eight years I had sought the help of over 20 physicians and specialists in three different states to treat my pain, but with extremely disappointing results and ever increasing medical bills. In the years since I have become a medical marijuana patient, I have finally found a safer and more effective alternative to the dangerous pharmaceuticals that were keeping me in chronic pain, not relieving it. Currently my pain is at a manageable level, thanks to my caring physician and medical marijuana caregiver, and I feel like I have a whole new lease on life. I now own and operate my own business and I am finally able to wake up without never-ending, unbearable pain and take care of my home and family.

HB 161 will hijack patient care from the oversight of medical professionals and place it in the hands of law makers and government officials who are unqualified to make life-altering medical decisions. I encourage you to do your duty and accurately represent your constituents who have already voiced their opinion in favor of the Montana medical marijuana program. Please help to keep personal medical decisions between patients, doctors and their families and out of the hands of overreaching government. Please vote with your constituents and vote no on HB 161.

Sincerely,

Jill Scarson

Bozeman, Montana

MAR 11 2011